



JOAN SMITH,
Acting Director

**County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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Board of Supervisors

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September 1, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem
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Supervisor Yvonne Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Joan Smith
Acting Director

**DECEMBER 6, 2005 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #16 RE: MISSING CHILDREN
MONTHLY UPDATE**

On December 6, 2005, your Board directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to reconvene the Missing Children Task Force in order to continue in the identification and refinement of practices for the prevention and recovery of runaways; and to report back on a monthly basis with status updates on the following:

- I. Existing Countywide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide;
- II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Website;
- III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways;
- IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3), and;
- V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

UPDATES

There was no Task Force meeting held in August due to conflicting schedules and vacations. The next meeting will be held on September 7, 2006, and a full account will be detailed in October's report to the Board.

The Runaway Adolescent Program (RAP) unit continues to analyze the data it collected on the regional office Runaway population. In their course of mining the data, the Department continues to glean more detail on this population, which in turn helps us to continue to employ specific strategies and initiatives. For example, we are continuing to find instances where there may be a way to utilize our existing Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children agreements. Specific detail via a department case example will be detailed later in this report. Additionally, analysis of the Runaway population shows a need to thoroughly review the appropriateness of homes, in which we find youth living against court order. In some cases, we may be able to legally clear the living arrangement, thereby honoring the wish of the youth to stay in a placement they have deemed suitable and the court has sanctioned. An example of a case, which details the activity of procuring Adoptions Safe Families Act, ASFA, compliance, is outlined in Section V of this report.

CURRENT STATUS

I. Existing County-wide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide:

As outlined in the July report to the Board, the Department's Emergency Response Command Post maintains its procedures by which to monitor runaway youth. A follow-up report will be made to your Board upon any changes in the supports given via DCFS Emergency Response Command Post.

II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Web site:

The ARKs database is being maintained via regional office liaisons that enter data on their specific runaway population. The database is also monitored by BIS in an effort to stay abreast of routine programmatic concerns. While the clean up of the site has been completed, we remain committed to maintaining the integrity of the data.

III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways:

As reported in the August Board Report, the Department has begun to look at ways to utilize existing strategies, including our Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, ICPC, agreements. Detailed below is a case that P-3 staff is working on:

L. T. (17-year-old young woman) was taken into care in July 2004, when her father died.

Her mother was living in Wisconsin and an ICPC agreement was initiated but subsequently denied when mother declined placement until her daughter agreed to participate in drug counseling. Since the disposition on July 2004, L. T. has continually AWOLed from placement with her longest stay in placement being 20 days. She has been AWOL since November 2004. Periodically, friends and relatives reported that they had spoken to L. T. or thought they might know her location (at one point it was suggested that she resided in New Jersey). The P3 worker began to make telephone calls to all known relatives. When the P3 worker attempted to call mother at her home in Wisconsin on June 27, 2004, the child, L. T. answered the phone. The P3 worker was able to get the youth to confirm that she was L. T. She stated she was living in that home, doing well and refused any other placement. The P3 worker was then able to assist the CSW in connecting with the mother and L. T. later. The mother informed the CSW that L.T had been staying with her for some time. L.T was attending high school, completing her school credits for graduation. (CSW has contacted the school and has verified enrollment) L. T. also has a part-time job at McDonalds. L.T. reports that she is happy with her mother and wants to have her jurisdiction terminated when she turns 18 in several weeks. L. T. informed the CSW that her mother is providing for all her basic needs and that she is getting along well with her mother and other family members.

The above case illustrates a typical category of Runaway youth. The youth has multiple runs, and substance abuse issues. In addition the case is typical in that the youth has returned to a relative "placement" not sanctioned by the court. This case is illustrative of the need for an ICPC for use as a strategy. (Please note at the time of this report the minor is 18 years of age.)

IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3):

As outlined in the March 1, 2006 Board report, all runaways are now referred to P-3 staff. A follow-up report will be made to your Board upon any changes regarding to this strategy.

V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

The Youth Concerns sub-committee has made a consistent request to have youth live with those adults they choose to live with. They have cited, in several different forums, that their wish is to be placed with adults who genuinely care for them and to not be placed at group homes.

To that point, please see below information on a case in which the Department was able, through the work of P-3 and line staff, to place a runaway youth:

I.T. (14 year-old male youth) and his family came into the system in December 2005 when mother abandoned several of his siblings at a park. I.T. was not with his siblings when they were abandoned and his whereabouts have been unknown for the duration of this case. The P3 worker was assigned to the case on May 3, 2006, to assist his social worker in locating I.T. On May 9, 2006, the P3 worker was able to locate I.T. at the home of one of his friends.

I.T. had previously been living on and off with relatives and had not been in school for over one year. The P3 worker spoke with the friend's mother who agreed to work with the Department to provide a placement for I.T. The P3 worker referred the non-relative extended family member, NREFM, for live scan and for an ASFA assessment. I.T. has now been officially placed with this NREFM and has been enrolled in summer school as well as a tutoring program. I.T. has had three visits with his mother since being placed and at least twice a month visits with his six siblings.

We have additional work to do for those runaways who have essentially found a home for themselves. The challenge has predominantly been the ability to clear, via ASFA standards, those persons a youth may be interested in living with.

CONCLUSION

DCFS will continue to work on its ARKs data base maintenance efforts, as well as carry on its analysis of the Runaway population. The Department remains committed to promoting a variety of viable permanency strategies designed to produce outcomes consistent with the Department's three goals of safety, permanency and reduced reliance on detentions.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me, or your staff may contact Susan Jakubowski, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

JS:AS:cm

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Office
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Abducted & Runaway Foster Childrens System (ARKS)
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RUNAWAY CHILDREN SERVICED BY DCFS
August 28, 2006

Category	Totals / Subtotal	Percent	Comments
Runaway DCFS Foster Children as reported in ARKS System	427		
Age			
0-9 years old	0	0%	
10-13 years old	12	3%	
14-17 years old	415	97%	Majority are teenagers 14-17
	427		
Gender			
Female	294	69%	More girls than boys runaway
Male	133	31%	
	427		
Ethnicity			
American Indian	3	1%	
Black	117	27%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	13	3%	
Hispanic/Latino	236	55%	
White	58	14%	
	427		
Placement Type			
Foster Home	185	43%	
Group Home	147	34%	
Relative/Guardian Home	89	21%	
(Not Indicated)	6	1%	
	427		
Location of CSW			
SPA 1 Lancaster	12	3%	
SPA 1 Palmdale	18	4%	
SPA 2 North Hollywood	29	7%	
SPA 2 Santa Clarita	15	4%	
SPA 3 El Monte	2	0%	
SPA 3 Glendora	39	9%	
SPA 3 Pasadena	13	3%	
SPA 3 Pomona	17	4%	
SPA 4 Metro North	38	9%	
SPA 5 West Los Angeles	17	4%	
SPA 6 Century	19	6%	
SPA 6 Compton	20	5%	
SPA 6 Hawthorne	9	2%	
SPA 6 Wateridge	33	8%	
SPA 7 Belvedere	36	8%	
SPA 7 Santa Fe Springs	37	9%	
SPA 8 Lakewood	35	8%	
SPA 8 Torrance	20	5%	
Adoptions	4	1%	
Specialized Programs	14	3%	
(Not Indicated)	0	0%	
	427		